

Municipal Water Law Presentation Relevant Statutes¹

Duty to Serve, Retail Service area and Local Government Consistency

NOTE: the verbiage below has been formatted for clarity

RCW 43.20.260

Review of water system plan, requirements -- Municipal water suppliers, retail service.

In approving the water system plan of a public water system, the department shall ensure that water service to be provided by the system under the plan for any new industrial, commercial, or residential use is consistent with the requirements of any comprehensive plans or development regulations adopted under chapter 36.70A RCW or any other applicable comprehensive plan, land use plan, or development regulation adopted by a city, town, or county for the service area.

A municipal water supplier, as defined in RCW 90.03.015, has a duty to provide retail water service within its retail service area if:

- (1) Its service can be available in a timely and reasonable manner;
- (2) the municipal water supplier has sufficient water rights to provide the service;
- (3) the municipal water supplier has sufficient capacity to serve the water in a safe and reliable manner as determined by the department of health; and
- (4) it is consistent with the requirements of any comprehensive plans or development regulations adopted under chapter 36.70A RCW or any other applicable comprehensive plan, land use plan, or development regulation adopted by a city, town, or county for the service area and, for water service by the water utility of a city or town, with the utility service extension ordinances of the city or town.

RCW 90.03.015 (Definitions)

- (3) "Municipal water supplier" means an entity that supplies water for municipal water supply purposes.
- (4) "Municipal water supply purposes" means a beneficial use of water: (a) For residential purposes through fifteen or more residential service connections or for

¹ The statutes relating to the Municipal Water Law (SESSHB 1338) are found in a variety of places within the RCW. For a comprehensive packet of the law, as passed by the legislature, you may download a copy of SESSHB 1338 from DOH's MWL Website: http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/municipal_water/municipal_water_law.htm

providing residential use of water for a nonresidential population that is, on average, at least twenty-five people for at least sixty days a year; (b) for governmental or governmental proprietary purposes by a city, town, public utility district, county, sewer district, or water district; or (c) indirectly for the purposes in (a) or (b) of this subsection through the delivery of treated or raw water to a public water system for such use. If water is beneficially used under a water right for the purposes listed in (a), (b), or (c) of this subsection, any other beneficial use of water under the right generally associated with the use of water within a municipality is also for "municipal water supply purposes," including, but not limited to, beneficial use for commercial, industrial, irrigation of parks and open spaces, institutional, landscaping, fire flow, water system maintenance and repair, or related purposes. If a governmental entity holds a water right that is for the purposes listed in (a), (b), or (c) of this subsection, its use of water or its delivery of water for any other beneficial use generally associated with the use of water within a municipality is also for "municipal water supply purposes," including, but not limited to, beneficial use for commercial, industrial, irrigation of parks and open spaces, institutional, landscaping, fire flow, water system maintenance and repair, or related purposes.

RCW 90.03.260 (Number of connections/population on water right removed as limiting attribute of the water right, in some circumstances)

(4) If for community or multiple domestic water supply, the application shall give the projected number of service connections sought to be served. However, for a municipal water supplier that has an approved water system plan under chapter 43.20 RCW or an approval from the department of health to serve a specified number of service connections, the service connection figure in the application or any subsequent water right document is not an attribute limiting exercise of the water right as long as the number of service connections to be served under the right is consistent with the approved water system plan or specified number.

(5) If for municipal water supply, the application shall give the present population to be served, and, as near as may be estimated, the future requirement of the municipality. However, for a municipal water supplier that has an approved water system plan under chapter 43.20 RCW or an approval from the department of health to serve a specified number of service connections, the population figures in the application or any subsequent water right document are not an attribute limiting exercise of the water right as long as the population to be provided water under the right is consistent with the approved water system plan or specified number.

RCW 90.03.386 (Place of use now equals the service area identified in a DOH approved water system plan or small water system management program, in some circumstances.)

(2) The effect of the department of health's approval of a planning or engineering document that describes a municipal water supplier's service area under chapter 43.20 RCW, or the local legislative authority's approval of service area boundaries in accordance with procedures adopted pursuant to chapter 70.116 RCW, is that the place of use of a surface water right or ground water right used by the supplier includes any portion of the approved service area that was not previously within the place of use for the water right if the supplier is in compliance with the terms of the water system plan or small water system management program, including those regarding water conservation,

and the alteration of the place of use is not inconsistent, regarding an area added to the place of use, with: Any comprehensive plans or development regulations adopted under chapter 36.70A RCW; any other applicable comprehensive plan, land use plan, or development regulation adopted by a city, town, or county; or any watershed plan approved under chapter 90.82 RCW, or a comprehensive watershed plan adopted under RCW 90.54.040(1) after September 9, 2003, if such a watershed plan has been approved for the area.